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May 26, 2021

The Honorable Tammy L. Whitcomb  
Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service  
Office of the Inspector General  
1735 N. Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dear Inspector General Whitcomb:

I am incredibly grateful for the dedicated work of United States Postal Service (USPS) employees, who provide an essential service to Maryland constituents and businesses. As we weathered the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have been depending on the USPS now more than ever. However, I am writing today regarding ongoing USPS service disruptions throughout my district over the last 15 months and more.

I have heard from constituents who have gone weeks without receiving mail – including paychecks and, even worse, life-saving prescriptions. Many have been charged late fees when their bill payments aren't received on time, damaging credit scores. Small businesses are unable to fill orders. I have personally visited post offices in my district and I am having regular conversations with local USPS leadership. My staff has worked tirelessly in partnership with the Greater Baltimore Postal Customer Council. These issues have also been covered extensively by local television and print media. Still, they persist.

I understand that USPS is facing challenges exacerbated by the pandemic and that the delays in the Baltimore District are not unique. However, there are several locations, in particular, that are disproportional both in volume of complaints and severity. Constituent complaints from these communities are consuming valuable taxpayer resources. Of the hundreds of complaints my office receives each week, many warrant casework inquiries as outlined below:

*March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021:* My office opened 96 new casework inquiries with nearly half of those pertaining to the Dundalk Post Office. Totaling to 291 active inquiries.

*April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021:* My office opened 128 new casework inquiries with nearly half of those pertaining to the Dundalk and Essex Post Offices. Totaling to 387 active inquiries.

*May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, to May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021:* My office opened 104 new casework inquiries with over half of those pertaining to the Dundalk and Essex Post Offices. Totaling to 414 active inquiries.

Therefore, I am writing to request your Office's assistance in determining the systemic causes of the irregular delivery and staffing shortages in the Baltimore District and identifying potential solutions to Specifically, I am requesting an audit by the USPS Office of the Inspector General for the following locations:

### **Dundalk**

Dundalk residents report their mail is frequently delayed – when they receive mail at all. Some constituents have gone several days to weeks without receiving mail. I have personally witnessed constituents visit the post office to pick up their mail in-person and emerge with entire shoeboxes of backlogged mail. Long lines and furious customers at this post office are the norm. I have also received reports of unsanitary workplace conditions in this office leading to perishable mail being eaten by insects and rodents.

The Baltimore Postmaster has stated that delivery delays and staffing shortages in Dundalk were due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, residents have reported infrequent mail delivery in this location for several years, well before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, Dundalk residents reported that from April 16<sup>th</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup>, despite assurances of improvement from the Baltimore Postmaster, their mail continues to be delayed. Customers frequently receive no response to their inquiries about the status of their mail.

### **Essex**

As of May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, my office received reports the Essex Post Office has 10 vacant routes posted in their bidding system. Currently, only 11 out of the 24 city routes at this location are assigned to a regular carrier each day, forcing carriers to use overtime and pick up an additional route or two on top of their already heavy workload. In addition, residents have raised numerous concerns about USPS' Informed Delivery program; they will frequently receive photos of mail to be delivered, but never receive it, or receive it months later.

### **Rosedale**

Rosedale residents have reported to my staff that, beginning in December 2020, they stopped receiving regular mail, often going a week or more without a delivery. In February 2021, residents reported that they have received multiple "past due" bills postmarked from December on the same day they incurred interest. In addition, residents have reported that they have been hung up on when attempting to call the post office regarding the status of their mail.

### **Parkville**

Parkville residents report that, beginning in January 2021, they have experienced substantial delivery delays and have incurred late fees on bills that were mailed well before their due date. Residents have reported that, when they attempt to contact the post office on the status of their mail, they have been hung up on or left unanswered.

## **Middle River**

Middle River residents report that, since January 2021, they have experienced delivery delays, mail being delivered to the wrong address or not delivered at all. When my office contacted local USPS officials, they stated that delivery was delayed due to the seasonal rush and that delivery should return to normal in a few weeks. However, as of May 2021, my office continues to receive regular mail delivery complaints from Middle River residents.

## **Towson**

My office has received reports from USPS employees that, due to staffing shortages, USPS workers have been working multiple 16-hour shifts in one week and that certain departments within the post office have been staffed at 50 percent or less for weeks. In addition, my office has received reports that priority mail has been left sitting in the office for multiple days and cannot be sent out due to the amount of backlogged mail filling up hallways.

I appreciate your attention to this matter. I want to reiterate my commitment to the USPS and my appreciation for the hardworking and dedicated postal employees in my district. I look forward to working with the Office of the Inspector General and the USPS to restore reliable mail delivery as soon as possible. Please contact Daniel Clayton of my staff at 202-225-3061 should you need any additional information on this inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger  
Member of Congress

CC: Louis Dejoy, Postmaster General of the United States